

## Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AID-05 FDRE-00 ORM-01 SR-02 SAJ-01

ACDA-05 ITF-05 SSO-00 NSCE-00 CIAE-00 PM-03 H-02

INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 /074 W

----- 002191

R 021159Z MAY 75

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3710

INFO AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

DIA WASHDC

CINCPAC HONOLULU

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 7973

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, VN,VS,CB,TH

SUBJ: FURTHER THAI REACTIONS TO THE INDOCHINA SITUATION

REF: BANGKOK 7654

SUMMARY: THE SURRENDER OF SAIGON TO COMMUNIST FORCES, FOLLOWING SO CLOSELY THE KHMER COMMUNIST SUCCESS IN CAMBODIA, HAS INTENSIFIED LOCAL CONCERN AS TO THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THESE EVENTS FOR THAILAND'S FUTURE. THIS CONCERN IS REFLECTED IN BANNER HEADLINES, IN A HOUSE MOTION FOR A DEBATE TO REVIEW THE SITUATION IN NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES, AND IN CONVERSATIONS BETWEEN THAI PERSONALITIES AND U.S. OFFICIALS. WHILE SENIOR RTG OFFICIALS DO NOT APPEAR HESITANT TO SPEAK OUT  
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WITH CONFIDENCE DURING THE RAPIDLY EVOLVING SITUATION,

OTHER THAI COMMENTATORS EXHIBIT SOME UNCERTAINTY IN ASSESSING THAILAND'S LONG-RANGE PROSPECTS. END SUMMARY.

1. FOREIGN MINISTER CHATCHAI CHUNHAWAN, CONTINUING HIS ALMOST DAILY REMARKS TO THE PRESS, STATE TO A REPORTER APRIL 30 THAT "SINCE THE FORD ADMINISTRATION DOES NOT HAVE AMAJORITY SUPPORT IN CONGRESS IT CANNOT DO ANYTHING." IN RESPONSE TO ANOTHER QUESTION HE ANNOUNCED THAT THAILAND "WILL ESTABLISH DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH NORTH KOREA VERY SOON, SOME TIME NEXT WEEK." DURING A HOUSE INTERPELLATION ON MAY 1, ON THE QUESTION OF THE "SITUATION IN NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES," CHATCHAI IN RESPONSE TO OPPOSITION MEMBERS' QUESTIONS PREMATURELY ANNOUNCED THAT LARGE SCALE U.S. TROOP WITHDRAWALS WILL START NEXT MONTH. HE NOTED THAT THE RTG WOULD DISTRIBUTE A STATEMENT ON THE ISSUE MAY 5 (FULL TEXT SENT SEPTTEL).

2. AT THE CLOSE OF THE HOUSE INTERPELLATION, PRIME MINISTER KHUKRIT PRAMOT MADE A STATEMENT IN WHICH HE REFERRED TO TWO MAJOR PROBLEMS FACING THE COUNTRY. THE FIRST IS POVERTY: THAI IN GENERAL HAVE LOW INCOMES. THE SECOND IS INJUSTICE: MERCHANTS, MIDDLEMEN, AND SOME GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS TREAT POOR PEOPLE UNJUSTLY. KHUKRIT SAID THAT THOSE WHO WISH TO INTERFERE IN THAILAND COULD EXPLOIT THESE TWO PROBLEMS. HE SAID THAT THE RTG HAS TRIED TO RESPOND TO THESE NEEDS OF THE THAI PEOPLE BY IMPLEMENTING DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS. IN FOREIGN POLICY, KHUKRIT SAID THAT THAILAND WILL BEFRIEND ENEMIES IN ORDER TO TURN ENEMIES INTO FRIENDS. THUS, HE ADDED, THE RTG WILL SOON BEFRIEND BOTH NORTH KOREA AND THE PRC BY EXTENDING RECOGNITION.

3. THE PREVIOUS DAY THE PRIME MINISTER, AT A NEWS CONFERENCE AT THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, SAID THAT IF A NEW VIETNAMESE GOVERNMENT IS ESTABLISHED, THAILAND "WILL RECOGNIZE IT AT ONCE." AT LEAST FOR PUBLIC CONSUMPTION, KHUKRIT PROFESSED TO BE "OPTIMISTICE OVER THE SURRENDER IN SOUTH VIETNAM BECAUSE IT MEANS CONFIDENTIAL

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THE END OF THE WAR, THAT PEACE AND QUIET WILL BE RESTORED."

4. IN A NEWS REPORT MAY 1, FORMER FOREIGN MINISTER THANAT KHOMAN DISCLOSED THAT HE WAS PUZZLED THAT THE U.S. REFERRED TO THE RUSK-THANAT AGREEMENT TO SUPPORT THE CONTINUED PRESENCE OF U.S. TROOPS IN THAILAND. (WE HAVE NOT DONE SO BUT LEFTIST PRESS HAS PLAYED THIS

THEME.) IT IS HIS VIEW THA THE 7.S. REJECTED THE AGREEMENT OVER A YEAR AGO, AND THAT IF THE RTG BELIEVES THAT THE AGREEMENT NO LONGER BENEFITS THAILAND, THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD CANCEL IT. THANAT ADDED THAT ALTHOUGH THE U.S. CANNOT ASSIST THAILAND WITHOUT U.S. CONGRESSIONAL APPROVAL, HE FEARED SOME MILITARY LEADERS WOULD NEVERTHELESS OBJECT TO U.S. TROOP WITHDRAWALS.

5. DURING AN APRIL 23 MEETING WITH DEFENSE ATTACHE OFFICE REPRESENTATIVES, MG PRAYUT CHARUMANI, ASSISTANT CHIEF OF STAFF FOR INTELLIGENCE OF THE ROYAL THAI ARMY, APPEARED GENERALLY OPTIMISTIC CONCERNING THAILAND'S CHANCES FOLLOWING THE FALL OF CAMBODIA AND THE PROBABLE (AT THAT TIME) FALL OF SOUTH VIETNAM. PRAYUT STRESSED THAT THE THAI, UNLIKE THE CAMBODIANS AND THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE, MAINTAIN THEIR FAITH IN THE BASIC PRECEPTS OF THE MONARCHY, RELIGION, AND THEIR COUNTRY.

6. DESPITE THE POSTIVE COMMENTS FROM GOVERNMENT LEADERS, SOME MID-LEVEL OFFICIALS EXHIBIT A MORE SOMBER ATTITUDE ABOUT THAILAND'S FUTURE. THUS ASA SARASIN, DEPUTY DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE ECONOMICS DEPARTMENT, MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, TOLD THE POLITICAL COUNSELOR APRIL 30 THAT THE PRIMARY RTG TASK RIGHT NOW WAS TO REORGANIZE ITSELF. ASA BELIEVES THAT NORTH VIETNAM MIGHT GIVE THAILAND A YEAR OR SO WHICH THAILAND SHOULD USE TO GET ITSELF ON ITS FEET, BUT HE WAS PESSIMISTIC ABOUT THAILAND'S LONG RANGE FUTURE. ASA FELT PARTICULARLY THAT THE ARMY NEEDED TO CHANGE ITS MILITARY APPROACH. IT SHOULD ORGANIZE ITSELF INTO SMALLER UNITS, RELY FOR WEAPONS ON SMALL ARMS RATHER THAN TANKS, AND SPEND MORE TIME IN THE

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FIELD. HE ADDED THAT THE U.S. HAD DONE ITS SHARE IN VIETNAM, BUT THAT THAILAND COULD NO LONGER RELY ON US. HE SAID THAT AMERICAN MILITARY FORCES WOULD HAVE TO LEAVE THAILAND AS WELL AS THE PHILIPPINES.

7. COMMENT. RECENT EVENTS IN INDOCHINA HAVE ACCELERATED THE PACE OF RTG REASSESSMENT OF ITS ELATIONSHIP WITH THE U.S. A COMBINATION OF GROWING COMMUNIST STRENGTH ON THAILAND'S BORDERS AND DIMINISHING U.S. PRESENCE IN SOUTHEAST ASIA HAS LED MANY ANXIOUS THAI TO CONCLUDE THAT THAILAND MUST QUICKLY ADJUST TO THE NEW REALITIES.

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